

BIRD MIGRATION PHENOMENA IN THE EXTREME
LOWER MISSISSIPPI VALLEY.

BY HENRY H. KOPMAN.

IT CAN be imagined easily enough that to take up all the considerations suggested in the title set to this article would be beyond the possibilities of a single paper for 'The Auk.' My intention is simply to pick out from among the general phenomena of southern Louisiana and southern Mississippi bird migration those important facts to which the general attention of the ornithological world has never been drawn. Aside from the ornithologists of the Department of Agriculture, to which several observers in this section have reported regularly every spring and fall for the past ten years, scarcely any of our ornithologists are acquainted with the striking peculiarities detected in bird migration in this latitude. One of the prominent tendencies, noted by me in a former brief communication to 'The Auk' (Vol. XX, July, 1903, pp. 309, 310), is procrastination in spring migration. A corresponding tendency is seemingly premature arrival in the fall. Under the first head, a very striking case is that of the three transient thrushes of this latitude, the Wilson's, the Gray-cheeked, and the Olive-backed. The case of these birds comes very readily to mind because it was only the past spring that I settled an important phase of their migrations through Lower Louisiana. Every spring for the past ten years, and not infrequently in the fall, I have been puzzled by a querulous whistle, to be heard, with few if any exceptions, in heavy night migrations the latter part of April and the early part of May, and again the latter part of September. As my knowledge of the conditions of migration have grown I have attributed this note to several species, each time discovering the impossibility of the suspected bird being the author, until I hit upon the Yellow-breasted Chat as the chief actor in the heavy migrations of the late spring and of the middle fall. In this belief I rested with fair security, so like the mellow *whoort* of the Chat was the oft repeated note of the night migrations. My first record of this note was the night of April 25, 1894. Heavy rains and an electric storm early in

the evening had made the conditions excellent for migration. The tremulous whistle was caught up as frequently as the notes of Yellow Warblers, Indigo Buntings, Sandpipers, Green Herons, and Night Herons. More than nine years later, May 9, 1903, I settled the mystery that had perplexed me more than any question that had come up in my experience. I caught one of the birds making the same note in the day-time. It was a Wilson's Thrush. Of all the guesses I had made, I had been unsuspecting of the thrushes. The abundance of the birds heard in night migration had led me off the track. As a bird of the woodland, the Wilson's Thrush is so retiring, and therefore seen so infrequently that one would scarcely hit upon it as the incessantly heard migrant. Once I had heard the note, however, I wondered that I had not before recognized the famous *whew* or *whoit* by which John Burroughs characterizes the voice of the Veery. It was dumbfounding to think that while in all my ornithological observations in this section I had never seen a score of Veeries in the course of ten springs, I had heard countless hundreds. Since the spring of 1897 I had known that both the Gray-cheeked and Olive-backed, especially the former, might appear in astonishing numbers as transients in late April and the first week of May. In hedges, weedy places, and willow thickets in pastures and other open places, I had seen scores of Gray-cheeked Thrushes in a single day the early part of May, but the Wilson's Thrush had been a consistent rarity. For the latter part of spring, in this section, it may be stated as a general proposition that these three transient thrushes will be found migrating together. I have come across heavy waves of the Gray-cheeked and the Olive-backed on various occasions the latter part of April and the early part of May. Usually at the same times the note of the Veery may be heard in night migration. The past spring I observed both the Gray-cheeked and the Wilson's together in a thicket of willows and hackberries between the new and the old levee at Audubon Park, New Orleans. The birds were detained by a slight temporary fall in the temperature that first became apparent May 9. I spent half a morning watching just these thrushes, and it was after watching for some time that I first heard the note of the Wilson's. The first day I could not see any of the Wilson's

Thrushes as they made the note, but the next day one called as I watched it through my glass. The Gray-cheeked were present only the 9th and 10th, but I last observed the Wilson's in the woods May 13, and the last were heard in night migration midnight of May 16. This is the latest the Wilson's Thrush has ever been recorded in southern Louisiana, as the 10th of May is the latest for the Gray-cheeked Thrush. The Olive-backed probably remains as late, but there is no later record than May 4.

As the abundance of these rarer thrushes is often a characteristic feature of the late spring migration of this section, so the absence of most of the less common *Dendroica* is also characteristic. When they do occur, however, it is almost entirely very late in the season, as in the cases of the thrushes. The Black-throated Blue Warbler is an exception to the latter statement. It is rare, but of the two records of its occurrence of which I know, both fell before the first of April. The Magnolia Warbler, however, the Blackburnian, the Chestnut-sided, the Bay-breasted, and the Black-throated Green, are usually seen, if at all, in the late spring. At New Iberia, La., in the south central part of the State, where the prairies begin to encroach, I have seen a female Bay-breasted Warbler May 15. Strange enough, the weather at the time did not show the usual fall in the temperature that accompanies, or, perhaps, causes the tarrying of the spring travelers. A majority of the few records for the occurrence of the Bay-breasted Warbler at this latitude in spring occur between the 25th of April and the 10th of May. The appearance of the Redstart at New Orleans and other points near it in spring occurs mostly at the same time. With the Bay-breasted Warbler seen at New Iberia there was a male Redstart. The Tennessee Warbler has recently been proved to have the same propensity. The past spring the only Tennessee Warblers I saw at New Orleans, and among the few of which I have any spring records, were noted between April 26 and May 9. Some were present almost every day of that period, and they seemed to be lingering contentedly.

Outside of the Warblers and Thrushes, there are other species that loiter unaccountably. For several years in succession the American Pipit was seen in abundance at New Orleans as late as the 20th of April. Small flocks would be seen even until the end

of the month and the last date has twice been set at May 2. The Savanna Sparrow always remains until after the first of May, and the last has been seen May 9. Like the Pipit, the Rusty Blackbird has been seen as late as May 2, and small singing flocks have been on hand at New Orleans until the very last week of April. May 7, Andrew Allison has seen the last Water Thrush (*Seiurus noveboracensis*) at New Orleans. It was with a week's wave of warblers, thrushes, and a sprinkling of a few other species, notably the Rose-breasted Grosbeak and the White-crowned Sparrow. The White-crowned Sparrows, four of which were seen May 1, were the only ones I have ever observed at New Orleans, and the only ones I have seen in this latitude in spring. Noted a month after the latest date I should have expected to find them, these birds have always seemed to me remarkable instances of the tendency towards retarded migration. The greatest of all the loiterers are the Waders. Almost no date is too late for some of the species, and it is doubtful whether all individuals of certain of the species believed to breed only in the far North ever leave the region of the Gulf Coast in summer. At Cameron, La., on the southwest coast of Louisiana, I saw four or five Sanderlings on the beach June 30. last. While the return of the waders to the lower Mississippi valley begins very early, I am hardly disposed to believe that these birds were returning migrants. Whether there had been any at Cameron earlier in June I was unable to know, as I had not been there before. The earliness of the fall migration in southern Louisiana and Mississippi, however, is remarkable. Pectoral, Solitary and Bartramian Sandpipers are almost certain to be back by the middle of July, and other species return in quick successive order. From the nature of their flight, however, the early return of the waders is to be expected, but how are we to explain the presence of the Black-throated Green Warbler in southern Mississippi July 30? In 1897 I took one on that date, during a very heavy migration at Beauvoir, Miss., on the Gulf Coast. Redstarts, Black-and-White, Cerulean, Yellow, and Prairie Warblers, which at the most are very rare breeders in southern Mississippi, the Redstart certainly not breeding that far south, appeared in considerable numbers at the same time and some had appeared two weeks or more before. Aug. 11, the Water-Thrush (*S. noveboracensis*) fol-

lowed. August 12 I took a specimen of the Golden-winged Warbler. At Bay St. Louis, Miss., Andrew Allison has taken Blackburn's Warbler, Aug. 11. While it is not always the same species that shows this unexpected tendency, it happens in one case or another with too much frequency to be disposed of on the ground of fortuity. It is obvious also that birds of about the same class have been participant in the tendency. These early movements have been known to include the rarer vireos also. In 1893, the Philadelphia Vireo, which had appeared furtively during the last days of July in a heavy growth of willows on the batture land of the Mississippi at Convent, La., forty miles up the river (west) from New Orleans, appeared in astonishing abundance August 2. I took one specimen, but there was no need of killing more, as the birds were about me on all sides. In spring, during the time of abundance of the Warbling Vireo, which is a common breeder along the Mississippi in southern Louisiana, I have never seen the Philadelphia Vireo, but beside the record just noted, I have several other records of its occurrence in this section in fall, always later, however, than on the above occasion. As for the Blue-headed Vireo, H. L. Ballowe (now Dr. Ballowe), of Diamond, La., on the Mississippi thirty miles south of New Orleans, sent me in 1893 a specimen of this bird that he killed August 4. Taken all in all, this is probably the most remarkable of these early records. The Blue-headed Vireo is a winter resident in the wet woods of southern Louisiana, but it commonly appears only at the beginning of the winter. The August record seems more in the nature of a 'freak' record than do any of the other records. A rare bird in this part of the South, whose case, nevertheless, is very clearly indicated as that of a bird preferring early fall migration, is the Olive-sided Flycatcher. In 1894 Mr. Ballowe sent me a specimen he had killed at Diamond, August 31. Andrew Allison recorded the Olive-sided Flycatcher at Bay St. Louis, August 29, 1902, and the present season I saw one August 16, at Covington, La., like Bay St. Louis, in pine woods. Covington is less than forty miles north of New Orleans.

One of the strange features of the early fall migration of this latitude is that it is composed chiefly of those species that in spring give little of their presence here, especially in the fertile alluvial of the Mississippi delta. Such are the Yellow Warbler, the Red-

start, the Black-and-White Warbler. The Yellow Warbler appears at New Orleans from further north about the middle of July, and by the last week of the month Yellow Warblers are present by hundreds. Even when appearing in waves in the spring, the Yellow Warblers are always restricted in their numbers at that season. As for the Black-and-White Warbler and the Redstart they are rarities at New Orleans in spring. Not so after the first of August. They are always to be found in reasonable numbers in the woods after that date and sometimes in large numbers. The Tennessee and Magnolia Warblers do not agree with the foregoing in being particularly early fall migrants, but they do agree in being the most abundant of our birds in the fall, and among the rarest in spring. The time of their arrival in fall approximates September 20.

THE CORRECT NAME OF THE PACIFIC DUNLIN.

BY S. A. BUTURLIN.

WHEN publishing, in 1902, Part I of my 'Limicolæ of the Russian Empire,' it was not without much hesitation that I proposed to give a new name to the Fantail Snipe of East Siberia,¹ as Vieillot's old one, *Scolopax sakhalina*, was a very suggestive one. But Vieillot's 'Nouveau Dictionnaire' was not to be found in Russia (not even in the Academical Library), and as H. Seebohm, R. B. Sharpe and others quote "*Sc. sakhalina*" invariably with a "?", I preferred to give a new name to the East-Siberian Snipe.

Through the extreme kindness of Mr. Charles W. Richmond,

¹ *Scolopax (Gallinago) gallinago raddei* nests from Yenesei eastward; differs from *Sc. (G.) gallinago* Linn. in having more white on the wing-lining and axillaries; the chest not so mottled with brown; feathers of the upper parts somewhat more mottled with rufous; the sandy buff edges of the scapulars and the feathers of the upper back much broader, some .08-.16 inch broad; pale central stripe along the crown also broader.